

Letter Knowledge Session 2

ABC Center

The ABC center is the most obvious place for children to engage in letter knowledge activities (though as you will read, letter knowledge need not be limited to this center).

The ABC center should be stocked with assorted materials for name and alphabet activities. These materials should be changed often to maintain children's interest.

ABC center materials may include:

- Magnetic letters and board
- Tactile letters (foam, felt, etc.)
- Alphabet puzzles
- Alphabet blocks
- Alphabet stamps
- Alphabet bean bags
- Alphabet playdough stampers
- Letter placemats for playdough
- Magnifying glass
- Pointers
- Materials needed for specific name and alphabet activities

Writing Center

The Writing center is the perfect place for children to practice writing their names and forming the letters that make up the words on the Letter Wall. Their writing need not be limited to marks on paper; tracing letters in sand (or shaving cream, as you will see in Angel's classroom) is fun and yields excellent results.

Making alphabet and name books in English and Spanish is another engaging and effective Writing center activity. Name books typically feature a page for each letter of the alphabet; children copy their names onto the appropriate page. ABC books are similarly constructed; words that have been used in class, usually held together by a theme, are written onto their corresponding letter pages (for example, *hammer* on the "H, h" page). Since class-made books are usually a collective effort, the teacher should gather and assemble the pages into a book (bound with staples, keyrings, string, or brads) the children can read over and over again.

Children should be provided with a variety of materials and tools needed for writing. Paper in different sizes and colors, as well as crayons, markers, pens, chalk, etc., will invite children to experiment with writing.

Library

Alphabet books and name books that have been read aloud in class can be placed in the Library center for children to explore on their own. Class-made

environmental print books, alphabet books, and name books, once completed, can also be included in the Library center for children to explore and enjoy.

Art Center

Children should be given many opportunities, using a variety of materials, to write letters. Using all sensory modalities in learning letters helps children assimilate this knowledge. Allow children to write in sand, shaving cream, salt, fingerpaint, etc. Children can also form letters from playdough, beans, buttons, or pipe cleaners.

Pretend and Learn Center

The letter knowledge activities you might introduce in your Pretend and Learn center will depend on the topics and themes you've been focusing on in your classroom. If, for example, you've been working on a restaurant theme, you could provide menus with words and pictures, or real items from a restaurant (e.g., cups, boxes, or bags). Children could create a name and a sign for the restaurant, design their own menu, write down their customers' orders, make placemats, etc.

Math and Science Center

In the Math and Science center, you can have children dig for letters in the sand or try to catch letters in the water with a net. They could then count and name the letters they found. Children could also sort letters according to certain characteristics, such as straight lines, curved lines, tall letters, or short letters.

Construction Center

In the Construction center, you can take the "letters as building blocks of language" idea to a literal level: have the children build letters out of blocks! They could build the first letters in their names. Also, provide paper and tape so that children may create road signs or labels for the structures they build.